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# Who's the American Indian on the MU Flag: A Timeline About Native Americans and Marquette University

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## **Who's the American Indian on the MU Flag?** *A Timeline about Native Americans and Marquette University*

Mark G. Thiel, CA (Certified Archivist)

### **Marquette University Logo and Flag**

Pere Marquette and the Indians, Wilhelm Lamprecht, 1869



In 1869, Wilhelm Lamprecht painted this fanciful scene, “Father Marquette and the Indians”, more than a decade before the University’s founding in 1881. It depicts Jacques Marquette (1637-1675), S.J., during his epic exploration of the Mississippi River in 1673. Here he is on the lower Wisconsin River near its mouth where it empties into the Mississippi. In so doing, he is seeking guidance from a Native man with his family while two Native voyageurs steady the canoe. Modern scholars have identified the Native voyageurs as Metis, or men of mixed French and Indian ancestry, and Marquette’s

journals identify meeting villages of Mascoutin or Illinois and Miami Indians in present-day Wisconsin.

Marquette University adopted its circular logo in 1907, which is comprised of its name, motto and founding year around the edge and images relating to its namesake in the center. The lower half includes Lamprecht's image of Marquette, the canoe and the voyageur in the bow; and the upper half includes the coat of arms of St. Ignatius of Loyola with symbols from his family. "Numen Flumenique" is the University's motto, which means "God and the River". The blue edge and gold lettering derive from the French field flag used during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, Marquette's legacy is reflected in Midwest place names from Marquette, Michigan, to Milwaukee with Marquette University, Marquette University High School, and Marquette Park.

### **Preliminary Work towards the founding of Marquette University**



Bishop John Martin Henni  
1805-1881



1801-1873

John Martin Henni, the first Catholic Bishop of Milwaukee, had a vision of a Jesuit university in Milwaukee, which would be named in honor of Jacques Marquette. In 1855, Pierre De Smet, S.J., who is best known in United States history for his work in promoting peace between the United States and the Northern Plains Indian tribes, spent several months in Wisconsin. In collaboration with Bishop Henni, De Smet helped to lay the groundwork for the future Marquette College by establishing Milwaukee's Jesuit community and securing the Marquette College charter from the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature.

## Marquette's First American Indian Alumni



Josiah A. Powless  
Marquette's 1<sup>st</sup> Indian alumni, 1904

Josiah A. Powless, an Oneida Indian from the Oneida Indian Reservation in Wisconsin, became Marquette's first American Indian alumni. In 1904, he graduated from the Milwaukee Medical College, which later became the Marquette Medical College and retroactively made its graduates Marquette alumni.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Powless served as the director of the Oneida Hospital on the Oneida Reservation where he also served as an itinerant doctor who made house calls. Lacrosse remained an important sport among the Oneida people who regarded Dr. Powless as an outstanding player and athlete. During World War I, he enlisted and served as a medic in the American Expeditionary Force in France where he died rescuing wounded soldiers in 1918.

Thereafter, American Indian students remained a minute, and invisible, part of Marquette's total student population.<sup>2</sup> Within the city, Indians went unnoticed, unless their unique cultural expertise was needed, and Marquette did not begin to actively recruit them as college students until the 1960s, when the recruitment of minority students gained momentum throughout the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> *Announcement Marquette University Department of Medicine*, 1909, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> In conversation with the author, Maxine Smallish, Marquette's American Indian student counselor 1986-1990, gave the size of the Indian student population at between two to three dozen students. However, a 1989 Marquette survey by the Multi-Cultural Center cites 3% of the participants as American Indian undergraduates, which seems incredibly high.

## Indian Images and Milwaukee/Marquette Mascots

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1990s, Milwaukee Indians comprised an extremely small and invisible minority and stereotypical images of Indians were prevalent in Hollywood films and as mascots in professional, scholastic and collegiate sports.<sup>3</sup>

In 1953, the Braves professional baseball team moved from Boston to Milwaukee and had a very successful first year with 92 wins and 62 losses that drew a then-National League record of 1.8 million fans to Milwaukee County Stadium. Tom Kitchkume (Potawatomi-Ho Chunk), their young Indian mascot “Chief Noc-A-Homa”, added to the festivities. While dressed in regalia, he came out of a tipi and danced a war dance whenever one of the Braves hit a homerun.



Tom Kitchkume, 1980s  
“Chief Noc-A-Homa”, 1950s

Prompted by the popularity of the Indian mascot/nickname by the Braves, the Marquette Student Senate adopted the “Warriors” nickname in May, 1954. Thereafter, Marquette sports teams used that nickname in conjunction with a series of three Indian images through 1986. In the fall of 1954, Patrick W. Buckett, a non-Indian student, introduced “Chief White Buck” and promoted the Warrior nickname. As a protégé of W. Ben Hunt, a prominent local writer on American Indian performing arts, Buckett was very knowledgeable and he had a diverse wardrobe of regalia, from which he created a sophisticated image with the name derived from the then popular white buck shoes.

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<sup>3</sup>Milwaukee Indians comprised nearly 1% of the city population according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Renee Zahkar, in *American Indians in Milwaukee* and in her presentation on November 3, noted that Indians’ past willingness to accept mascot rolls appears related to their desire to shed their invisibility and powerlessness. In turn, that willingness diminished as their visibility and power grew after the founding of Indian Summer Festival and Potawatomi Bingo Casino in 1986 and 1991 respectively.

Buckett portrayed White Buck at Marquette games and homecoming events well as on a local Saturday morning television show he hosted for children.

Native images during the Warrior years in Marquette sports –  
Chief White Buck, Willie Wampum and First Warrior, 1954-1988



In June, 1956 during the White Buck years, Marquette presented an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to Konrad Adenauer, the Chancellor of West Germany, who was hailed as a “Christian humanist” who saved post-war West Germany. Adenauer also had a well-known childhood fantasy to become adopted into an American Indian tribe, which Marquette aimed to satisfy as well. Marquette secured the services of Morris Wheelock, an Oneida Indian and Chief of the Consolidated Tribes of American Indians, then the principal Indian organization in the city. Wheelock honored Adenauer and Marquette’s president, Rev. Edward O’Donnell, S.J., with honorary adoptions in a ceremony that entailed smoking a sacred pipe, gifts of imitation Plains Indian-style war bonnets and Indian names, and a dance and parade involving several local Indians in regalia, which provided them some brief attention and visibility.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Konrad Adenauer: Wisconsin Center District facilities timeline, June 15, 1956, [http://www.milwaukeeetheatre.com/media/mediafile\\_attachments/03/83-facilitiestimeline.pdf](http://www.milwaukeeetheatre.com/media/mediafile_attachments/03/83-facilitiestimeline.pdf); 1957 Hilltop, pp. 66-67; *The Milwaukee Journal*, “Reich’s Chief Adopted by American Indians”, June 16, 1956, pages 1-2; copy in Konrad Adenauer file, Record Group A-4.5, Series 9.





Fr. O'Donnell, Konrad Adenauer (with sacred pipe) and Morris Wheelock, 1954

In 1960, realizing that no other student had expertise in American Indian performance, Marquette students transformed the Warrior concept into a generic buffoon with a paper maché head dubbed “Willie Wompum” (a.k.a. Wampum; spelling varies). Because playing Willie required no Indian cultural expertise, his antics comprised whatever stereotypical maneuvers would please Marquette fans. Consequently, Willie enjoyed popularity during the 1960s and until 1971, when four Indian students – Patricia Loudbear, David Corn, Schuyler Webster and Bernard Vigue – petitioned the Student Senate to retire Willie. Other Indian students then recast Marquette’s sports image as First Warrior, to provide sustained and institutionalized visibility in the historic garb of Wisconsin tribes.

For sure, some Indians, presumably Marquette students as well as Milwaukee residents, viewed it inappropriate for an Indian to represent an institution when the only basis for the representation was the relationship its namesake had with Indians 300 years ago. First Warrior also came with restrictions that classified it as a volunteer cheerleading position without financial support, which for Marquette’s very small Indian student population, proved to be First Warrior’s undoing. Marquette limited the position to a solitary volunteer who was expected to provide a substantial time commitment by performing at community events as well as Marquette basketball games, all without financial support, which some qualified lower-income students found unacceptable.<sup>5</sup> First

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<sup>5</sup> Studies on attendance at urban Indian powwows state that only about 10% of urban Indians today are readily involved in such heritage celebrations as either spectators or participants; since participation in such festivals correlated with the necessary skills to perform the First Warrior role, it would be reasonable to estimate that only about 10% of Marquette’s male Indian students had the necessary expertise to accept it. In conversation with the author, John Logan, a Marquette American Indian student with extensive expertise

Warrior also represented a culturally foreign concept to Marquette sports fans, the vast majority of who knew nothing about Native culture, and apparently they were unwilling and/or incapable to get sufficiently “fired up” by this specialized cheerleader. Nonetheless, three students did fill the position successfully: Clifford LaFromboise, 1980; Marin “Mark” Denning, 1980-1983 (shown above); and Rick Tourtillot, 1983-1986.

In the fall of 1986, the First Warrior position languished when no qualified student was willing to take on the responsibilities, and two years later, Marquette retired the position. However, Marquette retained the Warrior nickname through the 1993-1994 school year. In 2004, Marquette again searched for a new sports nickname and the Board of Trustees decided that a return to the “Warriors” nickname would not be permitted.<sup>6</sup>

### **More American Indian Students at Marquette University**

American Indian students apparently had positive experiences at Marquette. One was Mike Koehler, a grandson of Olympian Jim Thorpe. He enrolled in Business Administration, 1956-1957, and Liberal Arts, 1959-1961, and played Marquette football. On his 1956 enrollment application, he noted his desire to play football and described Marquette as the “Best Catholic college in country...” Later, he served as first an administrator and then a counselor in suburban Chicago school districts while earning a Ph.D.<sup>7</sup>

Another was Ro Chabot, a Passamaquoddy Indian from Maine, who enrolled in Business Administration and ROTC, 1965-1969. He then became a Chicago area businessman and president of the Mascoutin Society, an organization that promotes Indian heritage. When searching for a college, he received acceptance letters from many institutions, but he chose Marquette, because unlike the others, Marquette’s letter wasn’t a form letter. It was personalized, welcoming and handwritten, which set it apart, and he never regretted that he selected Marquette. He found that Marquette prepared him well in a supportive and caring way. However, the civil rights and Vietnam War protest marches were major distractions and notions about Willie’s inappropriateness were never an issue.<sup>8</sup>

American Indian students, in collaboration with staff, have participated in and created campus events. During the 1970s, they had limited involvement in the Minority Arts Festival, and during some years of the following decade, they hosted a Marquette University Powwow in conjunction with a springtime Native American cultural week.

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in traditional Indian dancing, 1986-1990, declined the First Warrior role out of concern for his study and outside employment needs; he was neither enthusiastic with nor opposed to the First Warrior concept.

<sup>6</sup> In conversation with the author, Joe Whiting, a retired Little Wound High School teacher from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, December, 2009, who reported a new Indian movement of sport ceremonies in South Dakota high schools that began on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the 1980s. From their warrior traditions, the students retrieved and integrated complex and sophisticated cultural ceremonies that effectively rallied and honored their teams. Consequently, they became popular and spread to other Midwest high schools with majority or significant minority Indian student populations. Like Chief White Buck and First Warrior, the new performances required in-depth Native American cultural knowledge. But now the Indian people themselves created and controlled the ceremonies and the non-Indian fans among them learned to accept them eventually.

<sup>7</sup> University Advancement, Mike Koehler contact reports, 2007, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Ro Chabot (Streamwood, Illinois) conversation with the author, November, 2011.



Since then, the Indian students have hosted intermittent guest speakers within an American Indian Heritage Month held late in the fall semester.



Ro Chabot, Marquette student (center), 1969, and 2011



Marquette student (left) with counselor Maxine Smallish, 1976



Powwow sponsored by Native American Student Association, 1983

### **Marquette Faculty and their Teaching and Research about American Indians**

Sociology 112, The American Indian, was Marquette's first course to focus on any aspect of Native American heritage. First taught the second semester of 1963-1964, it was an ethnological survey of the Western hemisphere since European contact that preceded the current Anthropology 3350, Native Peoples of North America.<sup>9</sup>

Before and since then, Native American heritage has figured in the course content and research of a number of notable Marquette professors. In the Department of History, Rev. Raphael N. Hamilton, S.J., taught from 1930 to 1961 with the explorations of Pere Jacques Marquette, S.J., as his primary research focus and Rev. Francis Paul Prucha, S.J., taught from 1959 to the 1990s with U.S. federal Indian policy as his primary research focus. In the Department of Sociology-Anthropology, Alice B. Kehoe taught from 1968 to the 1990s with the culture of the historic and contemporary Blackfeet (Siksika) of Montana as her primary research area; Norman Craig Sullivan taught from 1968 to the present with early historic Wisconsin archaeology as his primary research focus; and David Overstreet taught from 1974 to the present with ancient pre-historic Wisconsin archaeology as his primary research focus. In the Law School, American Indian and

<sup>9</sup>*Marquette University Bulletin of the College of Liberal Arts*, 37(1959-1961):9:165 and *Marquette University Undergraduate Pre-Registration Schedule for the Second Semester, 1963-1964*, p. 17.

Federal Indian Law were taught intermittently since 1997-1998 by David James Whitehorse Klauser (adjunct professor) and/or Scott Idleman.



Robert Mann, Veterans Service Officer for the Ho-Chunk Nation, presents newly promoted Lt. Col. David James Whitehorse Klauser with a blanket during a ceremony at Madison's Joint Force Headquarters March 19, 2011. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Ellis.

Klauser is a member of the Ho Chunk Nation who has served as their Attorney General. He has also served as an Assistant Wisconsin State Public Defender, a member and chair of the Board of Directors of the Indian Community School of Milwaukee, and a Lieutenant Colonel of the Wisconsin National Guard in Iraq and he has taught Indian law in the University of Wisconsin Law School.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Marquette Archives and its Native American Archival Holdings**

Following his teaching career, Father Hamilton founded the Marquette Archives Department in 1961, where his research documentation about Jacques Marquette and the commemorations of his epic voyage became Marquette's first archival collection pertaining to American Indians. In 1973, the Midwest celebrated the 300th anniversary of that voyage, which involved Fr. Hamilton in several of the events.

Meanwhile, Father Prucha researched his book, *The Churches and the Indian Schools: 1888-1912*, which details a confrontation between the United States federal government and the Catholic Church, regarding the management of government and church-run boarding schools for Indian students. Studying the many facets of the key players, their allies, and the events required extensive research in Washington, D.C., at the U.S. National Archives and the office of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions.

At the Catholic Bureau's office, Fr. Prucha learned that its holdings were extensive and an endangered treasure-trove of archival records. Fr. Prucha then began an effort to preserve those records at Marquette University, which included financial support

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<sup>10</sup> Online biographical statement, Indian Community School of Milwaukee, <http://www.ics-milw.org/board/#>, accessed December 27, 2011; Hocak Worak, 21:23 (December 14, 2007): 1, 25:7 (April 15, 2011): 7.

from Harry John, head of the Milwaukee-based De Rance Foundation and a past president of Miller Brewing, and an endorsement from Herman Viola, a prominent Smithsonian Institution director and Marquette alumni in History. Eventually, extensive negotiations with the Catholic Bureau led to an agreement and the shipping of its records to the Marquette Archives in two fully-loaded semi-trucks.



300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Marquette in Chicago, 1973  
Fr. Raphael Hamilton, S.J. (left), 1892-1980, and  
Fr. Georges Mathieu (Potawatomi)



F. Paul Prucha, S.J., 1921-



Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1874-  
Msgr. William H. Ketcham, Director, 1901-1921

Since then, the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions has sent more records and their collection has attracted many related ones of state and local, national and international importance. Shown below are a few visual items within the collections. The LaBelle family in a Milwaukee Catholic cemetery contains a milky white streak that they believe represents the spirits of their deceased loved ones. One of those was Jerry Starr, an ironworker killed the year before during the construction of Miller Park. Pope John Paul II's visitation to Phoenix took place in conjunction with a meeting of an international Native Catholic organization, the Tekakwitha Conference. Recently, the Vatican announced that Pope Benedict XVI will declare their namesake, Kateri Tekakwitha, a saint in 2012.

### Bibliography

See -- **American Indians and Marquette University: A Comprehensive Bibliography (includes all sources known by author)** by Mark G. Thiel, 2012.



W. Ben Hunt  
1888-1970



Black Elk  
1883-1950



Siggenauk Center Ceremony  
Marquette University, 1980s



Waukesha Powwow, 1980s

LaBelle Family at a  
Milwaukee Catholic  
cemetery, 2000



19<sup>th</sup> century pictorial catechism

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha (Mohawk), 1656-1680, sainthood candidate



Pope John Paul II visiting Phoenix, 1980



San Xavier del Bac Mission, Tucson